

HOSPITAL LIBRARY SERVICE

A New Department of Public Library Work
Established November 1, 1919

BY THE

SIOUX CITY PUBLIC LIBRARY

SIOUX CITY, IOWA



The Sioux City Public Library has recently established a new department of public library work, that of Hospital Service, for all local hospitals.

Having received a number of letters and comments from leading librarians and numerous inquiries regarding the work and with the thought that others may be interested in our new venture, this statement has been prepared.

THE IDEA OF PUBLIC LIBRARY HOSPITAL SERVICE.

It was the privilege of the writer while Camp Librarian of one of the southern camps for a time during the summer and fall of 1918, to observe the splendid work of the A. L. A. Hospital Librarian. He was greatly impressed with the opportunity for service afforded by this work and firmly resolved that upon returning to his local library, due consideration would be given to the matter of establishing library service in the local hospitals. If the A. L. A., co-operating with the military authorities and Red Cross, could establish and maintain library service in hospitals for the benefit of our convalescing soldiers, why could not and should not the Public Library at home also undertake to furnish library service to the many sick folks confined in our local hospitals? Was there not an opportunity here to carry over into civil life one of the good things so completely accomplished in military life? Why should it not become the legitimate function of the Public Library to undertake this work, especially in view of the fact that there has never been any systematic or organized plan to meet this real need, a situation which obtains in practically every city in the country.

On returning to Sioux City in October, 1918, we began immediately to plan to establish a new department of Hospital Service. The Board of Library Trustees authorized the new work to be established in co-operation with the hospital authorities. It was soon found that they were enthusiastic about the undertaking. Prominent physicians and surgeons of the city endorsed the movement and gave their hearty support. A hospital librarian was appointed and plans for a campaign for books to form the basis of the permanent collections to be established in the various hospitals were made. The people of Sioux City were asked to contribute the books. As a result of an intensive campaign during the week of September 28th to October 4th, during which time wide publicity was given to types of books wanted and even to lists of specific titles suitable for hospital use, the library secured over 5,000 volumes. The books given were in splendid condition and largely of the types requested. Many new books were purchased by individuals and given to the library for this service. Large containers were placed in the big department stores and book shops and library attendants were stationed in the stores to sell books for the Hospital Service, with results beyond our expectations. With a collection now placed in each of the six hospitals ranging from 300 to 500 volumes and supplemented by the

Main Library for special requests, with a Hospital Librarian employed to visit each hospital twice a week and find out from the patients what kind of reading matter is desired, whether it be a book of light fiction or a magazine, or whether it be a technical book, or even reading aloud that is desired, the Sioux City Public Library is the first public library, we believe, to establish such a service.

Six hospital book-trucks, designed after the latest model used by the A. L. A. in Library War Service were purchased at a cost of about \$250 and placed in the service. These trucks were donated to the library by our Sunshine Club, a local organization, the objects and purposes of which are "to bring happiness and good cheer into the lives of everyone and the promotion of good fellowship and fraternity between the citizens of our city."

We soon found that current magazines were in great demand in the hospitals. This problem is being solved through donations by members of the Sunshine Club, through the organizations of a Book and Periodical League in the Boy Scout and Catholic Cadet organizations, through donations of unsold copies by our magazine jobbers and through subscriptions placed by the library.

The question may arise as to what steps have been taken in order to guard against any possible spread of disease through the circulation of books in hospitals.

After conferring with prominent physicians and hospital authorities, as a matter of precaution and to safeguard against the



The Carriers of the Sunshine Libraries.

possible spread of disease, the following plan has been adopted and is rigidly adhered to:

1. Each hospital has its own permanent collection and books are not transferred from one hospital collection to another.
2. The books in each hospital collection are thoroughly fumigated at regular intervals.
3. Under no circumstances are books circulated to patients having contagious or infectious diseases. The Hospital Librarian makes it a point, on entering the hospital, to first secure a list of such patients as may be confined with contagious or infectious diseases. The number of each patient's room is taken and these rooms are carefully avoided.
4. Any books borrowed from the Main Library for special requests are thoroughly fumigated before being placed in circulation again.

During the recent "flu" epidemic it seemed wise to discontinue the library service altogether for a time. However, the situation was so very unusual, it seems unlikely that it will be necessary to discontinue the service again unless a similar situation should arise and then only temporarily would it be necessary to take this step.

What Sioux City has done in the matter of Public Library Hospital Service we believe any city can do. The field of Hospital Service "lies undeveloped at the door of practically every public library in America." Our experience shows beyond any question that the public is vitally interested in this work, so interested in fact that a generous public will make it possible for any library to undertake this service, with but very little or no call upon the budget, as compared with the regular departments of our work. The writer believes that the A. L. A. could do no better in seeking items for the Enlarged Program of American Library Service that will make a direct appeal to the public than to include in this program a specific endorsement of public library hospital service and encourage, promote and assist public libraries throughout the nation in every possible way in establishing this greatly needed humanitarian service.

C. W. SUMNER, Librarian,
Sioux City Public Library.

The Sioux City Public Library in establishing its Hospital Service has undertaken an entirely new line of work from the public library standpoint. Through his experience as Camp Librarian, Mr. Sumner realized the great psychological value of books in the camp hospitals and upon his return set about organizing such a service in the hospitals of Sioux City. The preliminaries were accomplished in a short period and the actual service was in full working order by December 1st, 1919.

The field of this service is as unlimited as are the varied tastes and interests of the hundreds of patients accommodated by the hospitals. Usually when we think of reading for the invalid it presents only the aspect of entertainment and relief from the many tedious hours to be spent in the hospital. This alone would warrant the

supplied materials requested by instructors of nurses' training classes such as books on massage, orthopedic surgery, mathematics, chemistry and nursing.

A point of interest in connection with the four months' experience in the hospitals is the comment heard on the service. Recently the superintendent of one of the large hospitals expressed her pleasure and satisfaction by saying, "Though this service has been with us so short a time we already notice the psychological effect on our patients. With their interest centered in these splendid books they have less time and opportunity to think of their own condition and consequently are much happier."

Patients watch for the coming of the Hospital Librarian and her book truck and on all sides she meets such expressions as these, "It's certainly a comfort to have these books." "This is the real use of a library." "I'm not nearly so lonesome since I can have books to read." "When are you coming again?" "Always leave a book or two for me if I am asleep." "Don't pass me up if my door happens to be shut." A mother whose son spent considerable time in the hospital said, "You have surely brought much sunshine to my son." Another patient told of the dread of coming to the hospital because of the long hours to be spent with nothing to do and added expressions of gratitude for the books and the visits of the Hospital Librarian for she was far from home and friends and visitors were few. This is but one of the many similar experiences, for many of the patients in each hospital are from many miles distant. From the men's ward comes this expression, "By George, what would we fellows do without this cart and its books?" Numbers of people have said again and again that it is impossible for them to express their appreciation of the Hospital Service.

Magazines, scrap books of cartoons, poetry and humorous stories prove very popular but there is always found the devotees to Shakespeare, Eliot, Dickens, Cooper, Milton, Carlyle and many other of the old masters.

The Hospital Librarian is frequently requested to stop a while for a chat with some patient who is far from home and craves just a bit of social contact. Reading aloud from newspapers, magazines and books, the telling of stories also falls to her lot, for in every hospital there is the children's ward where not only books are supplied but games, puzzles, cut outs and paper and rag dolls find their way to longing hands. The rag doll is indeed a treasure for "Raggety Ann" can tumble head over heels out of bed and suffer no permanent injury.

Each of the six hospitals is visited twice a week; visits are also made at intervals to the inmates of the County Farm and reading materials supplied. Thus indeed does the Sioux City Public Library become a Good Samaritan.

ROSE A. O'CONNOR, Hospital Librarian,
Sioux City Public Library.

COMMENTS OF HOSPITAL AUTHORITIES.

Miss Rose O'Connor,
Hospital Librarian,
City.

We thank you for the Hospital Service that you are rendering to our patients. They enjoy the books that you distribute very much, and look forward with pleasure to Miss O'Connor's visits.

The Service is a great accommodation, especially to those who are strangers in our city.

Very Sincerely
THE BENEDICTINE SISTERS,
St. Vincent's Hospital.

Miss Rose O'Connor, Hospital Librarian,
Public Library,
Sioux City, Iowa.

My dear Miss O'Connor:

We wish to take this occasion to tell you of the benefit and much pleasure the Hospital Service of the Public Library has been in St. Joseph's Hospital.

Many of our patients have enjoyed the splendid books, thanks to your good work and interest.

Yours truly,
SISTER MARY REDEMPTRA,
St. Joseph's Hospital.



The Surgical Ward in St. Vincent's Hospital.

C. W. Sumner, Librarian,
Public Library,
Sioux City, Iowa.

The Sioux City Public Library Hospital Service is an asset in our hospital life not represented on our books. It finds expression in being an important factor in the happiness of our patients.

FRANCES C. MATHEWS, Supt.
Samaritan Hospital.

Sioux City Public Library,
Sioux City, Iowa.

We find the "Sunshine Library" of the Sioux City Public Library Hospital Service invaluable to our patients and we would not like to be without it now.

Everyone who is able to read looks forward to the day when our librarian is to come with her abundance of excellent reading material which makes the time pass by so pleasantly for them.

MATERNITY HOSPITAL,
Grace Louise Williams, Supt.

Mr. C. W. Sumner, Librarian,
Public Library,
Sioux City, Iowa.

We wish to take this opportunity to express our appreciation of the Sioux City Public Library Hospital Service. If it were not for these books supplied to us through this service our patients would not have the joy they now have, as nearly all of our patients are from out of the city and their visitors are few. The comfort derived from these books is manifold.

CHRISTINE NICHOLAS, Ass't. Supt.
Lutheran Hospital.

Mr. C. W. Sumner, Librarian,
City.

My dear Mr. Sumner:

Will you permit me to thank you for what you have done in installing the library in the Hillside Sanitarium? It means so much to our patients to get the good books that they want directly from our own library instead of being obliged to go down town to select and bring home what we want.

The Hospital Library idea is, in my opinion, one of the grandest things that was ever done for patients who must submit to a temporary sojourn in some health institution. I wish to say this, too, that it is a splendid thing for Sioux City, for the majority of our out of town people who read good books will remember that there is an institution in this city which cares for the welfare of the patients in these health institutions. Therefore if there is any one thing that should be kept up, it is this work for our patients.

In conclusion I wish to say that it is very splendid also that you have such an efficient worker in this particular branch of library activity, because it requires a great deal of tact to handle patients and I can say that the tact shown by your present assistant in this work is splendid. Keep up this excellent work.

Sincerely yours,

DR. S. W. STAADS,

In charge of Hillside Sanitarium.